

Jeffreys' first record Grinder's Switch featuring Garland Jeffreys (Vanguard) was released in 1970. Grinders Switch (not the Southern band which came later) sounded amazingly like the Band and except for a couple of underground disc jockeys, the album went unnoticed. Three years later, Jeffreys self-titled solo debut appeared on Atlantic and though it heralded an important songwriter and a great singer and boasted a superb crew of backup musicians (as have all of his albums) this too went unnoticed. Finally in 1977, Ghost Writer (A&M) attracted attention. Gone was the folk-oriented singer-songwriter replaced by a poetic rocker who utilized rock, R & B and reggae with great skill. Jeffrey's is obviously influenced by Lou Reed (one of his biggest supporters) and Dylan, but where Reed half-sings, half-talks his songs, Jeffreys can really sing. He was also the first non-Jamaican to understand and know how to use reggae to his own advantage. Ghost Writer had songs that dealt with race relations, but was also the story of a struggling artist who'd paid too many dues. Unfortunately, the album's two weakest songs, "Wild in the Streets," (still a great rocker) and "35 Milimeter Dreams" received the most air-play. Those two songs along with his 1981 cover of "96 Tears" are what most people know of Jeffreys. They don't know about the spooky autobiographical "Ghost Writer," or the epic "Spanish Town," or simply great rock songs such as "She Didn't Lie" or "Lift Me Up."